

## *The National Philosophy Test—III*

TEMPLE G. PORTER  
*Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

What did we learn from the pomposities and incomprehensible musings of the existentialists and of Plato in our first two National Philosophy Tests? Two things, basically. First, we saw how a difficult passage, taken out of context, can be made to appear ludicrous. Second, we could not help but notice how even the most revered, emulated, and lofty thinkers of mankind were at times inclined, in their profundity, to the most blatant errors and laughable entrapment within their own wordiness. Immanuel Kant, as our third National Philosophy Test will amply demonstrate, was no exception.

We must concede to Immanuel Kant those laurels that go with profound thought. Indeed, Kant's thought became the springboard of philosophical investigation into the pool of noumena and phenomena for most of the Western philosophers who followed him. But Kant, as they soon found out, had filled the pool with molasses. His writing has not enlightened as many as it has left in murky darkness. Perhaps it is commentary enough to note that, although Kant wrote in German, many German students learn English in order to read Kant in English translation because, they lament, Kant is more understandable in English. A brief glance at any of Kant's writing in English will give you a keen appreciation of the German student's dilemma.

No matter what salutary pieces of wisdom we manage to extract from a reading of Kant, it becomes clear, almost instantaneously, that Kant illuminates, as few men are capable, the fact that language can be wretchedly inadequate as the vessel of thought.

Below are eleven quotations. Seven of them are genuine pronouncements of Immanuel Kant's. The remaining four, scattered at random, are purposely contrived nonsense. Your job, as always, is to distinguish the legitimate from the fraudulent. You will find the correct answers on page 190 of this issue. Can you understand I. Kant? I can't!

1

Even of a woman we may well say she is pretty, affable, and refined, but soulless.

2

The mental powers whose union in a certain relation constitutes *genius* are intuition and cognition.

3

Imperatives, therefore, are subjectively valid, and quite distinct from maxims, which are universal principles founded on objective rules.

4

And, in fact, we find that the more a cultivated reason applies itself with deliberate purpose to the enjoyment of life and happiness, so much more does the man fail of true satisfaction.

5

Blind chance is accepted as the explanation, not alone of the agreement of the generated products with our conception, and, consequently, of the technic of nature, but even of the determination of the cause of this development on dynamical laws, and, consequently, of its mechanism.

6

In this way *moral* teleology supplements the deficiency of physical teleology, and for the first time establishes a *theology*. For physical teleology, if it is not to borrow secretly from moral teleology, but is to proceed with strict logical rigor, can from its own unaided resources establish nothing but a demonology, which does not admit of any definite conception.

7

In the minor premises we speak of thought only in so far as it regards itself, as object, solely in relation to intuition and the disunity of consciousness, and not as likewise in relation to the substance through which it is given as object to thought. Thus our conclusion is arrived at fallaciously, and the substance of our intuition, *per sophisma figurae dictionis*.

8

All legislation (whether it prescribes universal or particular actions, and these either *a posteriori* by practical reason or by the judgment of another) involves two things: *first*, a *law*, which subjectively presumes the action that is to be done as optional, i.e., makes it contingent; *secondly*, a *link*, which *objectively* connects with the idea of this action the motive determining the spontaneous will to this action. Hence, the third element is this, that the law makes option the link.

9

But that reason may give laws it is necessary that it should only need to pre-suppose *itself*, because rules are objectively and universally valid only when they hold without any contingent subjective conditions, which distinguish one rational being from another.

10

For the mind could never think its identity in the manifoldness of its representations, and indeed think this identity *a priori*, if it did not have before its eyes the identity of its act, whereby it subordinates all synthesis of apprehension (which is empirical) to a transcendental unity, thereby rendering possible their interconnection according to *a priori* rules.

11

In order that unity of intuition may arise out of this manifold (as is required in the representation of space) it must first be run through, and held together. This act I name the *synthesis of apprehension*, because it is directed immediately upon intuition, which does indeed offer a manifold, but a manifold which can never be represented as a manifold, and as contained in a *single representation*, save in virtue of such a synthesis.

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#### ALL-PURPOSE WORDS

The versatility of words is almost beyond belief. Did you know, for example, that words substitute for clocks?

For many years, there were two large clocks in the lobby of the Oak Park, Illinois Post Office—one clock at each end of the building. Then came the day when one of these clocks went out of order and stopped forever. Since the other clock was still functioning, there was no need for repairs, and life went on as before.

Time passed, and the second clock also went out of order, throwing patrons of the Post Office into a timeless void. This, of course, could not be tolerated, and the Federal Government moved swiftly to rectify the situation. The faces of both clocks were covered with posters proclaiming that "American Ships Bridge the Seas!"

Words—a group of them comprising a slogan, in this particular instance—have successfully replaced the need for clocks. When a patron of the Post Offices looks up at one of the clocks, wondering what time it is, the reassuring thought that American ships are everywhere fully answers his question. The necessity for fixing the clocks has been eliminated.

Words conquer all!